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THURSDAY, MAY 4, 2017

Behind the Scenes at BAM—Evan Kutcher: production, carpentry, and rigging

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Evan Kutcher. Photo: David Hsieh

Shows at BAM come in all genres, medium, forms, and shapes. So our amazing stage crew is used to tackling any technical requirement, including building a set from scratch when the occasion arises. Evan Kutcher, a production coordinator and the head of carpentry and rigging at the BAM Fisher since August, 2016, demonstrated his bona fide carpentry skills recently. When the team for *Poetry 2017*, produced by BAM Education, decided to transform the Fishman stage into a graffiti-splashed building

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façade, Evan was happy to pick up his chainsaw and don a hard hat. The result speaks for itself, seen in these photos. We chat with Evan about how it all came about.

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Q: *What does your job entail?*

A: I'm a production coordinator and the head of carpentry and rigging at the BAM Fisher. Rigging is the term we use when we hang things over somebody's head, whether it's lights, speakers, curtains, set pieces, or projectors. I'm the one who makes sure that that's safe and operated in the way it should be.



The set for *Poetry 2017* in the Fishman Space. Photo: Evan Kutcher

As a production coordinator I work with the companies that are coming in and our general management to figure out all their tech needs: the lighting, the staging, sound, and video, and how to bring those things into our theater so they can put on their shows.

During the Next Wave season we have a different show each week. So I focus on every single show that comes in, every single week. How this company needs this kind of seating and these curtains hung in these places, and then change that for the next week. It's a lot of planning. There is not a lot to build but there is a lot to put into the theater and change that from week to week, which is nonstop.

Q: Have you worked in a similar job before?

A: I was a technical director before with a focus on building sets. I freelanced at a lot of places in New York. I went to New York University for technical direction. Being the head of carpentry and rigging lends itself my skill sets.

Q: How did you get into this line of work?

A: Back in my high school in Delaware I was on stage crew for the school plays—moving platforms on and off the stage. We had a company coming in and I helped doing some rigging because I knew our space. And they asked if I had thought of going to college for this. I hadn't. So I applied and got into NYU's theater department. I knew I liked theater and I liked building things. But I did not like being on stage at all. So I went for the technical side. I've been in New York since.



Nuu Knynez (left) and The Peace Poets. Photo: Anna Lee Campbell

Q: *How was the Poetry set built?*

A: The director Baba Israel and the designer Nate Benecaf showed me some renderings and asked if I could build it, instead of sending it out, which would have been four times as expensive. We discussed what we could do within our space and then did it. I translated the renderings into engineering drawings and figured out how to actually build it out from scratch. I also hired painters to come in and painted all the graffiti on the wall. From the first meeting until it was on stage was about two months. The actual building was about two weeks.

There were some challenges. The shop we have is relatively small. So we can't build big pieces in there. There was another show happening in the theater and the noise would have been heard in the theater. So I couldn't do it when the show was on. It was a challenge finding the time and space to do it within the time frame.

Q: *Was there another occasion when you needed to do this?*

A: For *portrait of myself as my father*, we worked with nora chipaumire to build a boxing ring. We figured out how to lay the floor down and how all the posts could fall down at the end. That was a lot of trying and figuring out.

Posted by Susan at 5:01 PM

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Seeker May 12, 2017 at 5:06 PM

Amazing work Ethan! Thank you for helping us take Word. Sound. Power. to the next level

-Mikal Amin Lee
Program Manager/Producer

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